

# IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation  
African Development Bank

*From experience to knowledge...*  
*From knowledge to action...*  
*From action to impact*

## Mauritania: AfDB's Contribution to Infrastructure and Governance

### What did IDEV evaluate?

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) evaluated the **Country Strategy and Program of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB or 'the Bank') in Mauritania for the period 2011-2020**, specifically the Results-Based Country Strategy Paper 2011-2015 and the Country Strategy Paper 2016-2020. As of 31 December 2020, the Bank financed **24 projects worth USD 216 million** in seven sectors of intervention: industry, mines and quarries; transport; agriculture; finance; multisector; water and sanitation; and social development. The African Development Fund financed 54.5% of all operations and the Government contributed USD 16.8 million.

This Brief focuses on the Bank's contribution to Mauritania's infrastructure and governance. Social and economic infrastructure as well as governance interventions absorbed about half of country's official development assistance envelope. By targeting these sectors where it has comparative advantages, the Bank was able to leverage USD 26.6 million from the African Development Fund to raise USD 245 million from co-financiers for projects worth a total of USD 273 million over the period.

### What did IDEV find?

The Bank's strategy and program during the period was evaluated using the following criteria: Relevance (**rated highly satisfactory**), Effectiveness (**rated satisfactory**), Coherence (**rated satisfactory**), Efficiency (**rated satisfactory**) and Sustainability (**rated satisfactory**).

### Alignment with Mauritania's Strategic Priorities

Eight of the 10 objectives of the four projects approved over the 2011-2020 period for transparent and effective **economic and financial governance** are specifically aligned with the country's priorities. In the **water and sanitation** sector, 5 of the 7 objectives were consistent with the focus areas of the National Strategy for Sustainable Access to Water and Sanitation by 2030, thus contributed to improving access to drinking water, including in rural areas. The single **transport project** for the construction of the Rosso bridge contributed to the promotion of sub-regional and regional trade as well as the improvement of access to basic services and quality



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of life for the population. In addition, the Bank took advantage of its institutional capacity and achieved increased production and productivity mainly through **agricultural infrastructure projects**. However, no project to improve **access to electricity** in rural and urban areas was approved, despite that it was programmed in the two CSPs, particularly growth support infrastructure to increase the availability of affordable energy services to economic units.

### **Achievement of Infrastructure Project**

In Mauritania, the national poverty reduction objective was achieved, and the national poverty rate fell from 42% in 2008 to 31% in 2014 while the rural extreme poverty rate dropped sharply from 40.8% in 2008 to 25.1% in 2014.

The access to equitable and quality basic services in the **water and sanitation** sector increased significantly between 2015 and 2018, but disparities persist between urban and rural areas. The rural drinking water supply and sanitation project in the southern region approved in 2006 and closed in 2015 resulted in the construction

of: i) 52 boreholes and 54 drinking water supply systems in communities with over 500 inhabitants; ii) 72 institutional latrine blocks in public places; and iii) 13,100 family constructed home latrines following the establishment of pilot community-led total sanitation facilities in 440 villages. Due to lack of resource, investment was deferred in the **renewable energy sub-sector**. However, 100 megawatts of wind power are under construction with support from other financial partners. In the **agriculture sector**, the Hydro-Agricultural Development project in West Brakna (PAHABO) affected 15,454 beneficiaries and especially women, who represent 57% of the rural poor. The project reduced poverty and improved the beneficiaries' food security by establishing production support infrastructures that included: i) 950 ha for rice-farming; ii) 5600 ha of flood-recession farmland; and iii) 106 ha of women's vegetable production gardening areas. It also opened up access to the area by constructing dyke road between Boghé and Mboyo (68 km) and two access roads (19.3 km) linking it to the asphalted Rosso-Boghé Road (including 64 new crossing facilities and the rehabilitation of 3 existing ones) and expanded access to drinking water for 11,000 inhabitants of 20 localities.



However, effectiveness was constrained by bottlenecks both at the country level and within the Bank. The time-lapse for operations worsened from 3.6 months between 2011-2015 to 4.7 months between 2016-2020, although it remained below the critical threshold of 6 months. Disbursement rates of the major infrastructure projects ranged from 1.3% to 12.2%.

### **Building Capacities for Ownership and Sustainability**

In the governance sector, all ministries and structures involved in public investments are connected to the electronic Development Assistance Database, which has increased the capacity to design, monitor and evaluate public investment projects. In addition, the Project Preparation Facility did finance the technical studies of the Hydro-Agricultural Development Project in West Brakna, Phase II (PAHABO II), which eventually led to implementation under the name Africa Agricultural Transformation Support Project. A consistent and realistic concept was proposed for the establishment of a maintenance

and service fund managed jointly by the administration and user representatives with the necessity to monitor its effective implementation.

### **What lessons did IDEV draw?**

- In countries with low performance-based allocations, additional Bank resources are successfully leveraged when the regional and/or country team implements a proactive strategy.
- The private sector is an important lever for the country's development.
- Judicious selection of sectors of intervention and systematic articulation of Bank projects with operations of the country's main development partners (external coherence) is crucial to developing an effective strategy to raise more financing and achieve national development goals.

- Effectiveness at the project level does not guarantee the achievement of the expected outcomes at the various higher levels.

## What did IDEV recommend?

- Improve the articulation between the targeted objectives at national and pillar levels and the expected results of the operations programmed in the country assistance strategy.
- Ensure that the rhythm of two supervisions per year is adhered to.
- Foresee mechanisms that ensure the sustainability of benefits right from the design of Bank operations and monitor their effective implementation.
- Improve the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in the CSPs and Bank's operations.

## What was the methodological approach?

Guided by eight questions centered on the evaluation criteria, the evaluation team consulted stakeholders during the design stage of this assessment to promote the use of its findings.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, evaluation data was collected through online interviews and the review of existing documentation (Bank's corporate and project documents) and the Bank's project database (SAP Project System). Further electronic inputs were provided in the form of implementation data, comments and review from Bank Task Managers at the Bank's HQ as well as those at the Bank's North Africa Region involved in the operation implementation. Evaluation sub-questions concerning cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis have remained unanswered due to lack of data. However, the quality of the CSPE is intact as data has been provided for the key indicators, resulting in well-documented evaluation findings.

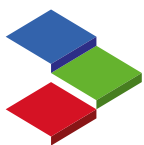
## What did Management respond?

Management welcomed IDEV's evaluation of the implementation of the Bank's RBSP and CSP's in Mauritania. Moreover, Management appreciates the findings and recommendations which are consistent with the findings of project monitoring and supervision missions and portfolio performance reviews. The evaluation recommendations will guide the dialogue with stakeholders at the country level and will inform the design of the new country strategy for the 2023-2027 period, as well as the implementation of current operations and the design of future operations.

### About IDEV

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) at the African Development Bank conducts independent evaluations of Bank operations, policies, and strategies, working across projects, sectors, themes, regions, and countries. By conducting independent evaluations and proactively sharing best practices, IDEV ensures that the Bank and its stakeholders learn from experience and plan and deliver development results to the highest possible standards.

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